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AUTHOR Glenn, Ethel C.; Pood, Elliott
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ABSTRACT

Students in the traditional public speaking course spend the bulk of their time in listening, yet little structure is given to this time to improve its educational value. The assumption underlying the Critical Listening in Public Speaking (CLIPS) Index is that students' listening time can be used to learn more about public speaking by using a content analytic technique to structure listening behavior. The content of a speech can be analyzed using the following categories: (1) subject, (2) purpose, (3) introduction, (4) organization, (5) supporting material, (6) conclusion, (7) voice, (8) enunciation, (9) fluency, (10) vitality or energy, (11) language, and (12) body. The technique includes numerical formulas that provide students with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their listening behaviors in the public speaking setting and help to focus attention on the elements of public speaking. Instructors can use the CLIPS Index in various ways, and its value as an instructional strategy includes training students to listen with more detailed observation, to focus on many aspects of speech-making, and to comment on speeches using meaningful terms in a specific frame of reference. (Author/AEA)

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THE CLIPS INDEX:

Critical Listening in Public Speaking

by

Ethel C. Glenn
Associate Professor
Director of Communication Education
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Elliott Pood
Assistant Professor
Director of the Institute for Communication Research
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Elliott Pood

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ABSTRACT

Students in the traditional public speaking course spend the bulk of their time in listening, yet little structure is given to this time to improve its educational value. The assumption underlying the CLIPS Index is that students' listening time can be used to learn more about public speaking by using a content analytic technique to structure listening behavior. This technique includes numerical formulas that provide students with feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their listening behaviors in the public speaking setting and help to focus attention on the elements of public speaking.

THE CLIPS INDEX

Critical Listening in Public Speaking

An examination of several current "best-sellers" among public speaking textbooks--Wilson and Arnold, Minnick, Monroe and Ehninger and Gronbeck, or Jeffrey and Peterson[2], to cite only a few--reinforced our belief that most instruction in introductory public speaking classrooms follows a similar pattern. Students are taught to analyze audiences, choose topics, identify and structure the parts of a speech into workable outlines, find suitable research materials to support their assertions, and acquire some skill in the vocal and physical aspects of speech delivery. Where empirical data exists to support the claim that mastery of these various aspects and elements of speech making will increase the probability of speaking more effectively, such evidence is included in a summary fashion. We assume that professors lecture on these topics, that students read the texts and take written tests, and then devote outside time to preparation and practice in order to present speeches to their classmates.

If this sketchy, over-simplistic model suggests with some degree of accuracy that our own public speaking classrooms are not unlike many others in various colleges and universities, we feel some justification in conjecturing that a number of you who teach similar courses have felt a concern for the amount of in-class time that students spend listening to each other. Assuming an average class size of 20, students would sit through 19 speeches in order to present 1, provided your institution mandates class attendance, or that you are a true

believer in the value of a friendly and encouraging audience and therefore build into your syllabus the appropriate rewards or punishments for listening participation. Pressures of time, combined with a desire to individualize instruction tend to draw our in-class emphasis toward the speaker and ways of improving the structure, evidence, and organization of the speech. Certainly some learning through listening takes place and many instructors have devised special critique sheets or exercises designed to better utilize the listening time. The CLIPS-Critical Listening in Public Speaking-Index is such a device that we created to help our own students become more skillful listeners during the rounds of speeches.

The CLIPS Index requires that student listeners prepare open-ended critiques of speeches, then content analyze them according to a method specified subsequently. The results enable students to create profiles of their listening behavior, based upon traditional speech-critique categories. We find that this approach is superior to distributing categorized critique sheets from the start for two possible reasons. First, completing the content analysis and profile is potentially much more interesting than a mimeographed handout. Second, students start from their own knowledge and experience in the listener role, rather than adjusting at the outset to a list of categories, many perhaps not yet covered in lectures or reading. Hopefully, CLIPS will take the students from their own past perspectives in listening to speeches into the traditional framework that our literature suggests will make

us more effective and discriminating listeners.

We have purposely chosen to present the CLIPS Index as an instructional strategy, not as an empirical test of this underlying assumption about classroom listening. However, both novice and experienced instructors have used the Index in college classrooms. Post-administration questionnaire and interviews revealed that over 90% of all students involved found the CLIPS Index helpful in structuring and improving their listening.

HOW THE CLIPS INDEX WORKS

While the CLIPS Index assumes certain generally accepted elements for evaluating public speeches, teachers should feel free to develop categories of their own if they so desire. The method will work, even if a change is made in the categories.

The categories used here are based closely on the criteria identified by Wilson and Arnold,[3] and provide a base for the evaluation. They are (1) subject, (2) purpose, (3) introduction, (4) organization, (5) supporting material, (6) conclusion, (7) voice, (8) enunciation, (9) fluency, (10) vitality or energy, (11) language, and (12) body. A thirteenth category, "other" is available, but not included in the numerical scale. The twelve categories divide into six predominantly content areas and six predominantly delivery areas.

Definitions and examples for each category are as follows:

1. Subject

This category includes any references to the value, interest, appropriateness, or definition of the subject of the speech.

Is the subject matter worthwhile or valuable in some way to the listeners?
Is the subject interesting?
Is the subject appropriate for the audience?
Was the subject clearly defined for the listeners?

Examples:	Speech was informative	+1
	Very interesting subject	+2
	Subject not interesting	-1
	Extremely dull topic	-2

2. Purpose

This category refers to whether or not the speaker defined the purpose of the speech and whether or not the purpose was delimited appropriately for the length of time available, the occasion, and the audience.

Was the purpose of the speech stated?
Was the purpose delimited suitably for the time available?
Was the purpose inappropriate for the particular audience?

Examples:	Purpose clearly stated	+1
	Very clear definition of purpose	+2
	Purpose unclear	-1
	Never defined the purpose	-2

3. Introduction

This category deals with the introduction or "Beginning" of the speech and includes any comments made in reference to this section.

Does the introduction get the attention of the audience?
Does the introduction provide necessary information?

Is the introduction appropriate as a lead-in to the rest of the speech?

Examples:	Attention-getting beginning	+1
	Very good beginning	+2
	Dull opening	-1
	Introduction failed to get attention	-2

4. Organization

This category includes any reference to the clear, effective, and logical flow of information and ideas within the speech.

Were ideas presented in some logical order? (chronological, historical, psychological, etc.)
Was the speech easy to follow?
Did the speaker use effective transitions?
Were internal summaries appropriate?
Was the use of analysis effective?

Examples:	Speech well organized	+1
	Very well prepared	+2
	Couldn't follow train of thought	-1
	Failed to keep to the topic	-2

5. Supporting Material

This category includes any references to examples, facts, illustrations, stories, testimonies, statistics, audio-visual aids, or other sources of information used to substantiate the content of the speech.

Was supporting material interesting?
Was supporting material effective?
Was evidence credible?
Were supporting materials convincing?

Examples:	Good use of statistics	+1
	Examples were very effective	+2
	Documentation was weak	-1
	Highly unbelievable sources	-2

6. Conclusion

This category includes any references to the conclusion or "ending" of the speech.

Did the conclusion state the point of the speech?
Did the conclusion review the speech informally?
Did it list the main ideas of the speech?
Did it stimulate desired action on the part of the listeners?

Examples:	Good conclusion	+1
	Very strong finish	+2
	Ending left me up in the air	-1
	Conclusion was far too abrupt	-2

7. Voice

This category includes any references to vocal characteristics.

Was the voice distinct?
Was the vocal variety adequate?
Was voice volume effective?
Was the voice pleasant to listen to?

Examples:	Nice voice	+1
	Dynamic voice quality	+2
	Need to project voice more	-1
	Extremely monotonous voice	-2

8. Enunciation

This category refers to speech clarity and elements of articulation.

Were words clearly enunciated?
Could all words be understood?
Were unusual words (places, names, technical jargon) accurately pronounced?

Examples:	Articulation was o.k.	+1
	Pronunciation very clear	+2
	A few mispronunciations	-1
	Mumbled much too much	-2

9. Fluency

This category includes references to the smoothness of delivery, particularly when the extemporaneous speaking style is used.

Did the speaker seem sure of what he was saying?
Did the speaker rely on his notes too much?
Did the delivery sound "memorized"?

Examples:	Seemed to talk easily and smoothly	+1
	Seemed extremely sure of her/himself	+2
	Used a lot of "uhs" and "ands"	-1
	Long pauses and stumbling very distracting	-2

10. Vitality, energy

This category includes comments about the enthusiasm and both physical and vocal strength of the speaker.

Was the speaker enthusiastic?
Did the speaker hold the interest of the audience?
Did the speaker have a real outreach to the audience?
Did the speaker seem strong and vigorous?

Examples:	Seemed really sincere	+1
	Very vital and lively	+2
	Seemed somewhat disinterested	-1
	Bored and boring	-2

11. Language

This category includes references to grammar, language style, and vocabulary.

Did the speaker convey ideas clearly?
Did the speaker use correct grammar?
Did the speaker's choice of words increase the interest and impact of the speech?
Did the speaker use an appropriate style?

Examples:	Chose words well	+1
	Excellent vocabulary	+2
	Too verbose	-1
	Used entirely too much slang	-2

12. Body

This category includes any reference to ways in which the speaker used his/her body in the presentation of the speech.

Was eye contact adequate?
Were movements generally meaningful?
Were gestures effective?
Was posture acceptable?

Examples:	Good eye contact	+1
	Gestures very appropriate	+2
	Don't tap on podium	-1
	Swaying was very distracting	-2

Other

This category includes any references to areas not included in the first twelve categories and includes comments that cut across several categories (e.g., "Good speech")

Was the speaker courteous to the audience and/or introducer?
Did the speaker make a good personal impression?
Overall, was it interesting? ("It" meaning speech and/or speaker.

Ask students to write open-ended evaluations of a speech in which they express their opinions in any meaningful statement form (phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.) Once these evaluations are complete, probably an overnight assignment, then give instructions for studying the critiques and breaking them down into evaluative assertions. An assertion is an evaluative statement about a speech. For example, an evaluator might state, "Interesting subject, but vocabulary too elementary." The assertions in this statement are (1) interesting subject," and (2) "vocabulary too elementary."

After the assertions are isolated, student would then compile lists, according to the following sequence: the comment object and the evaluative term. For example, the assertion, "interesting subject" would be subject/interesting; and "vocabulary too elementary" would be vocabulary/too elementary.

Students then take a rating sheet (Figure 1) and code the comment objects to the appropriate category. In the example subject/interesting the category assigned would be (1) subject, and for vocabulary/too elementary, the category would be (11) language.

/Insert Figure 1 about here/

In addition to assigning the comment object to a content category, the evaluative term must be assigned a numerical rating category. Numerical ratings are based on the follow-

ing scale:

+1 - positive (such terms as good, fine, effective, nice, interesting, well-planned, attention-getting, well-prepared, adequate, standard, O.K., all right)

+2 - strongly positive (such terms as extremely + positive term, very + positive term, exceptional, inspired, excellent, outstanding, superior)

-1 - negative (such terms as un- or in- + positive term: uninteresting, ineffective; dull, boring, lacking, bad, crummy, routine)

-2 - strongly negative (such terms as very + negative term, extremely + negative term, failure, failed, rotten)

The use of the code sheet can be illustrated by the previous example. In subject/interesting, the evaluative term would be coded as a +1. Since the comment object goes under the category of subject, and the evaluative term is +1, the student would make a slash mark in the box, subject +1.

Once the student's criticism has been completely coded, the next step is to tabulate the following three indices:

I. Critic's Coverage Score (CCS)

A. Determine the number of comment object categories in which evaluations were made. _____

B. Divide "A" by 12 (the total number of comment object categories.) _____

C. "B" is the CCS.

The CCS is the percentage of comment object categories perceived and recorded by the student compared to the total number of possible comment object categories. This score can vary from 0 to 1.0. The higher the score, the more

categories the student is observing.

Note: Remember that the CLIPS Index seeks mainly to focus listening behavior by making students aware of the many elements to be considered in a speech. It is not a measure of the quality of student evaluations.

II. Content/Delivery Ratio (C/DR)

A. Add the number of marks made in all four numerical rating columns for the first six comment object categories (content). _____

B. Add the number of marks made in all four numerical rating columns for comment object categories 7-12 (delivery). _____

C. Divide "A" by "B" to obtain C/DR. _____

The C/DR is a ratio of evaluations made about delivery to evaluations made about content. A score of 1 indicates an equal number of comments on both content and delivery, while a score of more than 1 indicates more comments about content. The optimum score is 1. The larger the deviation above or below the score of 1, the more imbalance of attention toward content or delivery.

Note: Ultimately more comments about content would be desirable. However, beginning public speaking students often focus most of their remarks about classmates on delivery. The C/DR can alert students to this problem.

III. Critic's Negative/Positive Ratio (CN/PR)

A. Add only those slash marks in columns +1 and +2. _____

B. Add only those slash marks in columns -1 and -2. _____

C. Divide "A" by "B". The result is the CN/PR.

The CN/PR is the ratio of positive to negative remarks made by the critic. A score of 1 would be a perfect balance. A score of above 1 would indicate more positive comments, while a score of below 1 would indicate more negative comments. This provides students with information on the orientation of their critical behavior.

Note: The CN/PR moves toward a qualitative measure, but only within the limited framework of a basic attitudinal orientation to the critical process. It alerts students to the necessity of focusing upon both successful and unsuccessful elements in speechmaking.

EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF THE CLIPS INDEX

Figure 2 represents a completed codesheet. In this instance, the student wrote an evaluation which included two -1 comments about the subject, one +1 comment about the subject, one +2 comment about the subject, and so forth. At the same time, this student failed to make any comments about the purpose of the speech, the introduction, the speaker's enunciation, or the speaker's fluency.

/Insert Figure 2 about here/

Using the completed codesheet (Figure 2), the student calculated the three scores as illustrated in Figure 3.

/Insert Figure 3 about here/

These scores can be interpreted in many different ways depending upon the individual philosophy of public speaking instruction. Our observations suggest the following as a viable example of interpretation: (1) CSS - relatively good coverage if this were a first experience in making a critique. Yet one-third of the comment object elements were ignored; (2) C/DR - slightly more emphasis on delivery--student needs to focus more heavily on speech content; and (3) CN/PR - student is dividing almost evenly between positive and negative remarks--a healthy critical attitude.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

Public speaking instructors could utilize the CLIPS Index in a number of different ways. One workable method is to select a day early in the semester, before you have lectured extensively. Present for the class a well prepared and delivered speech by giving it yourself, having a guest speaker, or showing a videotape or film. Prior to the speech, tell the students that they are to prepare a 1-1/2 to 2 page written critique of the speech before the next class meeting.

At the next class meeting, explain the evaluative assertion concept and give instructions for marking the critiques. It might be useful to have students exchange papers to avoid alterations (such as mentally editing, "What I meant to say was. . ."). Then distribute the gridded code sheet and students can enter and total their own assertions, and complete their own scores on the three indices.

After study and discussion, collect the forms and prepare a descriptive composite profile, to be used in further discussion of the sample speech--perhaps having students hear the speech again for comparison.

In classrooms where time permits, the CLIPS Index could be used for every round of speeches. At a minimum, the procedure should be repeated once more, perhaps about three-quarters of the way through the semester, this time using an entire round of student speeches. After students identify and record their assertions, the scores could be compared to those from early in the semester.

Note: As we use the CLIPS Index as a device for making better use of listening time, not as a measure of students' critical acuity, we do not grade the forms nor use them as an evaluative measure in computing final course grades.

VALUES OF THE CLIPS INDEX

Several values can be derived from the use of the CLIPS Index as an instructional strategy. As we stated in the beginning, the most obvious benefit is that classroom listening time is used in a manner that is potentially more interesting and initially more personalized than when students are given check-sheet critique forms. Yet eventually this process steers student listeners toward detailed observation, not the permanent vagueness that may be encouraged by continued use of open-ended critiques.

Second, learning about the component factors of speech making usually comes from three sources: instructor lectures, textbook reading and test-taking, and the preparation and delivery of the student's own speeches. The Clips Index offers a fourth source in that it directs attention to those specific factors while listening to others speak. Hopefully students learn to focus on many aspects of speech-making, not just a limited few. Although we are ultimately far more interested in the quality of our students' evaluative abilities, during this early training stage, the mere increase of content categories is rewarding, for total awareness of the components of speech making must precede skill and artistry in criticism. Following exposure to the CLIPS, several of our students realized that they had been primarily delivery oriented rather than absorbing the content of speeches. Such a shift in focus may help build more discriminating consumers of public communication.

Another benefit is the foundation for generating discussion offered by this technique. Most public speaking teachers have experienced the pained silence in the classroom when the request for comments and suggestions on a speech is made, particularly early in the semester. The CLIPS Index gives students a frame of reference and a set of meaningful terminology from which to comment.

For all of these reasons, the Critical Listening in Public Speaking Index is a useful instructional strategy.

We have been pleased with both the direct and indirect feedback from students that suggests that the procedure is of real value.

REFERENCES

[1]Initial development work on this index was undertaken in the Fall, 1975, at Florida State University. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following individuals in this process: R. Allen, D. Cornelius, T. Derzypolski, L. Gracie, C. Hoskinson, D. Pistana, and C. Williams. An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Southern Speech Communication Association Convention, April, 1979.

[2]Wilson, John F. and Caroll C. Arnold. Public Speaking as a Liberal Art (4th ed.: Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1974); Minnick, Wayne C. Public Speaking (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979); Ehninger, Douglas, Alan H. Monroe and Bruce E. Gronbeck. Principles and Types of Speech Communication (8th ed.: Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1978); Jeffrey, Robert C. and Owen Peterson. Speech A Text With Adapted Readings (2nd ed.: New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975).

[3]Wilson and Arnold, p. 334.

Figure 1

Codesheet

	-2	-1	+1	+2
1. subject				
2. purpose				
3. introduction				
4. organization				
5. supporting material				
6. conclusion				
7. voice				
8. enunciation				
9. fluency				
10. vitality, energy				
11. language				
12. body				

Figure 2

Sample Completed Codesheet

	-2	-1	+1	+2
1. subject		11	1	1
2. purpose				
3. introduction				
4. organization		1	1	
5. supporting material		1	1	
6. conclusion		1		
7. voice		1	11	
8. enunciation				
9. fluency				
10. vitality, energy			111	
11. language		1		
12. body	1	11	11	

Figure 3

Sample Computation Sheet

I.	Critic's Coverage Score:	
	A. Number of comment object categories in which evaluations were made.	8
	B. Divide "A" by 12, total number of comment object categories.	8/12
	C. The CCS is	.67
II.	Content/Delivery Ratio:	
	A. Add all marks in first 6 comment object categories.	9
	B. Add all marks in comment object categories 7-12.	12
	C. Divide "A" by "B" to obtain C/DR.	.75
III.	Critic's Negative/Positive Ratio:	
	A. Add all marks in columns +1 and +2.	11
	B. Add all marks in columns -1 and -2.	10
	C. Divide "A" by "B" to obtain CN/PR.	1.1